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FEDERAL AID TO SCHOOL LUNCHES

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The nation has mobilized on many fronts to win the war--on the military, the industrial and the home front. Nutrition, too, has been mobilized on many fronts--food for our fighters, food for future offensives, food as a weapon of invasion, food to keep our allies fighting, food for U. S. war workers and a fair share for all civilians.

Nutrition has been mobilized on the school front, too: better school lunches at less cost for more children; a nourishing breakfast for children who come to school hungry; even supper at school in areas where this service has proved to be necessary, and, in case of disaster due to war or to emergencies caused by flood or tornado, communal feeding in the school lunchroom.

With the country at war, many children cannot depend upon the home to supply a nourishing noon meal. In some homes the provision for breakfast and evening meal is also uncertain. This is not surprising in view of the number of mothers now working in war industries and the number who have volunteered for vital war work as nurses' aides in hospitals, as helpers in child day-care centers, in community food preservation centers, in Red Cross canteens. Remember, too, the number of homes that now have no paid service because housekeepers and cooks are in war jobs.

Aside from the children who cannot go home for lunch because no one is there to prepare it, many children need a good noon meal at school because of difficulties in transportation or because a change in the school schedule has shortened the lunch period or shifted it so it no longer coincides with the meal hour at home.

A school feeding program affords a systematic setup for making sure that a large part of the child population receives a suitable share of foods high in nutritive value in at least 21 good meals a month.

School feeding not only is a means of contributing to the good nutrition of children but also is an important food distribution device in war time. In recognition of this fact, Congress has made a maximum of \$50,000,000 available to Food Distribution Administration to use in providing food to community school lunch programs that need a supplement to locally available funds in serving a well-rounded noon meal.

As part of its nation-wide food program, the F.D.A. is now ready to formulate program plans with state education agencies and to enter into agreements with the sponsors of school lunch programs whose applications it approves, reimbursing the sponsors up to a designated amount for a wide variety of specified foods.

Any public and nonprofit private school or child care center will be considered eligible to participate in the program, provided federal assistance is necessary in order to operate an adequate program serving nutritious lunches to all children. Although the program is not limited by law to children from low income families or to low income schools, it is obviously desirable to provide assistance where the greatest need exists. Funds available for the program are probably not adequate to grant aid to all schools that are in need of a lunch program or that may request federal assistance.

The greatest nutritional deficiency exists among low income groups. In spite of the fact that our national income is at an all-time high level, many families still lack sufficient income to provide their children with adequate diets. Their difficulties are increased by higher food prices, rationing and the relative scarcity of certain important foods.

With the aid of education officials, nutrition committees and other groups, a determined effort will be made within each state, county or community to inaugurate the program first of all in those schools that are in greatest need of its benefits.

The primary aim of this federal assistance is to ensure that children receive one nutritious meal each day. In accomplishing this aim under the terms of the new local-purchase community school lunch program, aid is given to American farmers in the long-term development of better domestic markets for agricultural commodities.

In the interest of good nutrition, the F.D.A. reimbursement or rate of indemnity is in proportion to the nutritive value of the lunch served, as well as to the number of children who benefit by the lunch. The maximum rate of payment, 9 cents for each child served, is for a Type A or complete lunch which provides from one third to one half of the day's nutritive requirements for the child.

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No meal for children can be considered complete without milk but, if milk is not available and the other requirements for Type A are met, the maximum payment for this particular type of luncheon is 7 cents per child served.

To assist schools and child care centers that are not able to serve a complete lunch but are interested in taking advantage of F.D.A. assistance, the plan outlines a Type B lunch, less adequate nutritionally, for which the maximum rate of indemnity is 6 cents. If the Type B lunch is served without milk, the maximum reimbursement is 4 cents per lunch.

Sponsors who are unable to meet the requirements of the Type A or the Type B lunch but are able to serve $\frac{1}{2}$ pint of fluid milk per child per meal may enter into an agreement with F.D.A. for the Type C lunch and be reimbursed 2 cents per child for milk. The school milk program, popularly known as "penny milk", no longer exists as a separate program because fluid milk is now made available in the Types A, B and C lunches.

Foods are purchased by the sponsor locally, from farmers or from food merchants. Records to be kept by sponsoring agencies cover (a) purchases of food, (b) number of meals served, by type, (c) number of children served without charge and at less than cost and such other facts as the administration may deem necessary.

The foods for which the F.D.A. will reimburse the sponsor, in accordance with the terms of the agreement, are: Milk and cheese; fresh and dried fruit; fresh and processed vegetables; fresh meat and poultry; eggs; dry beans and peas; soybeans and products thereof; peanuts and peanut butter; oleomargarine with added vitamin A; butter, lard and other cooking fats and oils; cereals and such other foods as may be specifically designated by the administration as being eligible for reimbursement under this special program.

In general terms the plan is as follows: The F.D.A. pays the sponsor for food purchased, provided that the monthly payment to any school or child care center does not exceed the cost figure obtained by multiplying the number of meals served by the maximum rate of payment for the type of meal served.

As child feeding projects are, and should be, community programs, this federal plan is intended only to assist the communities that need help by providing approximately 60 per cent of the cost of the food required to serve a nutritionally adequate lunch, or about 35 to 40 per cent of the total cost of operating a lunch project.

The terms of the agreement are simple and forms to be filled and records to be kept by the sponsor are few. The sponsoring agency agrees to offer lunches to all children attending the school or child care center and to serve lunches without charge to all children unable to pay. No distinction or segregation of any sort is permitted between paying and nonpaying children.

All funds accruing from the operation of the programs are to be used only for maintaining them, in serving more lunches without charge, in reducing their price to paying children and improving their quality. All projects covered by the agreement are to maintain proper sanitation and health standards in conformance with all applicable laws and regulations.

Child feeding specialists agree that the main meal of the day should provide the child with from one third to one half of his food requirements. They agree, further, that for many children the best meal of the day is the one received at school and that, for some children, this may be the only meal. In line with this thinking and with the goal of the national nutrition program - better nutrition for all - the F.D.A. offers maximum reimbursement to sponsors who agree to serve a complete noon meal to children.

Type A (Complete). The F.D.A. specifies that the Type A lunch, maximum payment 9 cents, shall consist of at least: (1) $\frac{1}{2}$ pint of milk as a beverage; (2) 2 ounces of meat or fish or 1 egg or 2 ounces of cheese or $\frac{1}{2}$ cupful (cooked measure) of dry peas, beans or soybeans or $\frac{1}{4}$ cupful of peanut butter; (3) 1 cupful of vegetables or fruit or $\frac{1}{2}$ cupful of each; (4) 2 slices of bread or 2 muffins or other hot bread, made with whole grain or enriched flour or cereal; (5) 2 teaspoonfuls of butter or oleomargarine with added vitamin A.

Suggested Patterns. From the standpoint of nutritive value, the quantity of the different kinds of food is more important than the manner of preparing and serving the lunch. Many patterns of Type A lunches can be developed.

Three suggestions for covering the content of the complete lunch follow:

1. It may be built around a main dish (stew, casserole or salad), including item 2, the protein food, plus one half of item 3, supplemented by a raw vegetable or fruit and served with milk, bread and butter or oleomargarine.
2. It may be built around a sandwich, using the content of items 2, 4 and 5 and served with milk and two vegetables or a vegetable and a fruit.
3. It may be served as a plate or tray meal, consisting of individual portions of the different types of food in the amounts outlined.

Not all schools or child care centers have the facilities for preparing and serving the Type A lunch. In some communities where school feeding programs are a new venture, the sponsor may be able to obtain local support for a noon meal that does not come up to the Type A standard but, nevertheless, makes a real contribution to good nutrition.

As sponsors working under these circumstances may be in need of assistance, the F.D.A. has described the content of a less adequate lunch for which it also offers reimbursement.

Type B. The F.D.A. specifies that a Type B lunch, maximum payment 6 cents, shall consist of at least: (1) $\frac{1}{2}$ pint of milk as a beverage; (2) 1 ounce of meat or fish or $\frac{1}{2}$ of an egg or 1 ounce of cheese or $\frac{1}{4}$ cupful (cooked measure) of dry peas, beans or soybeans or 2 tablespoonfuls of peanut butter; (3) $\frac{1}{2}$ cupful of vegetables or fruit; (4) 2 slices of bread or 2 muffins or other hot bread, made of whole grain or enriched flour or cereal; (5) 1 teaspoonful of butter or oleomargarine with added vitamin A.

Suggested Patterns. There are various patterns around which menus that include the content of the Type B lunch may be planned. For Example:

1. This type of lunch may be built around a 1 cup serving of thick soup chowder, stew or a casserole dish, including the content of items 2 and 3 and served with milk, bread and butter or oleomargarine.

2. It may be built around a $\frac{3}{4}$ cup serving of a salad; using the content of items 2 and 3 and served with milk, bread and butter or oleomargarine.

3. It may be built around a sandwich, using the content of items 2, 4 and 5 and served with milk and a fruit or a vegetable.

Innumerable menus to introduce variety into the noon meal can be developed around Type A and Type B lunch patterns--menus that require a minimum of cooking equipment and labor, and menus that make use of extensive equipment and an adequate amount of help.

Simplification of menus to reduce the labor of preparation, service and dishwashing to a minimum, important at all times, is essential in the present shortage of help. Work plans for the school lunchroom manager and much other information of value to her and her assistants are contained in a government publication, "Handbook for Workers in School Lunch Programs, With Special Reference to Volunteer Service," NFC-3, August 1943. Copies can be had upon application to the Food Distribution Administration, U.S.D.A., Washington 25, D. C.

School officials and other persons interested in additional information about F.D.A.'s local-purchase program for school lunches should get in touch with their state F.D.A. office or with one of the regional offices (located in New York City, Atlanta, Ga., Dallas, Tex., Denver, San Francisco, Des Moines, Iowa, and Chicago) or should write to the Food Distribution Administration in Washington, D. C.

F.D.A. officials are anxious to administer their assistance to community school lunch programs in a way that will make the maximum contribution to the better nutrition of children and are, therefore, interested in enlisting the full cooperation of state departments of public instruction and of local school administrators.